

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

January 21, 2015

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Meeting Date: January 21, 2015

Called to Order: 6:00 PM

Location: 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls MA

Finance Committee Members Present: John Hanold, Sharon Kennaugh, Lynn Reynolds Michael Naughton and Greg Garrison. Lisa Adams was absent.

Selectmen Present: Mark Fairbrother. Christopher Boutwell and Michael Nelson were absent.

Others Present: Town Administrator Frank Abbondanzio, Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen, Peter Golrick & Jeanne Golrick

Minutes

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 7, 2015.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Fiscal Year 2016 Schedule I – Salaries of Elected Officials

- Tax Collector/Treasurer and Town Clerk are on wage scale. The Fiscal Year 2016 amount reflects a step increase and a 1% COLA granted to all union employees.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend the requested increases for the Tax Collector/Treasurer and Town Clerk from \$66,270 to \$68,271 and from \$63,697 to \$65,620 respectively.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

- The Tree Warden is requesting a \$200 increase from \$1,300 to \$1,500 because other elected officials received increases a few years ago. Ms. Reynolds noted that the increases for the Boards of Selectmen, Assessors and Health came a few years after board stipends were significantly reduced as a result of budget constraints. The increases granted in 2014 did not bring those officials back up to their previous levels. Mr. Naughton agreed and felt the explanation for the request was not compelling, as the situation was quite different, and does not feel that the Tree Warden has a comparable level of hours required or level of responsibilities of the elected boards.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend a stipend of \$1,300 for the Tree Warden.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Fiscal Year 2016 Schedule II – Salaries of Appointed Officials

- The Board of Health is requesting to eliminate the Burial Agent stipend. This was paid for work done outside of office hours. Permits can now be accessed by Funeral Directors online.

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Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend the elimination of the Burial Agent stipend.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

- The Board of Health is requesting a \$500 increase in the stipend for the Barn Inspector. This is a 100% increase and is being requested because of the following:
 - The Barn Inspector visits as many “farms” or farm animals as she can find in Montague. Some contain a single horse or goat while others are comprehensive farms with many livestock.
 - The Barn Inspector counts and evaluates each animal for general health and for the presence of adequate food, water, and shelter.
 - This year the Barn Inspector visited 45 individual barns (many in the furthest reaches of town), and counted and evaluated 744 animals.
 - The Barn Inspector is not paid for mileage.
 - In comparison, the Animal Inspector quarantined 14 animals with “bites of unknown origin” this means we got notification from a veterinarian that they had treated an animal for a bite. Usually the bite is infected which gets them to the vet in the first place. Quarantining an animal requires 2 house calls by the animal inspector one to issue the quarantine and assess the animal’s health and behavior and a second to again assess the animal and lift the quarantine. The Animal Inspector also quarantined 17 animals that had bitten or scratched a human. We get notification from hospitals and doctor’s office’s stating they have treated a human who received a bite from an animal. The quarantining of an animal that has bitten a person also requires 2 house calls by the Animal Inspector, one to issue the quarantine and assess the biting animal and a second to again assess the animal and lift the quarantine if the animal is healthy.
 - In short, in 2014 the Animal Inspector made 31 house calls, while the Barn Inspector made 45 house calls and counted 744 animals which were all evaluated for general health and for the presence of adequate food, water, and shelter.

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend the requested increase of the Barn Inspector stipend from \$500 to \$1,000.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

- The IT Administrator is requesting an increase from \$2,000 to \$3,500 because the IT responsibilities are very time consuming and stressful. Ms. Miller is constantly being interrupted while trying to concentrate on her assessing duties.
 - Mr. Hanold noted that while this is an addition to the responsibilities of the main position, it does not require additional work outside of normal hours.
 - Ms. Reynolds can appreciate the request, and the work required and asked that we request more information from Ms. Miller before making a decision.
 - Mr. Abbondanzio noted that Ms. Miller is also investigating if there is a way to share IT services with the school district.

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- Ms. Kennaugh noted that Ms. Miller does not seem to enjoy the additional responsibilities and suggested it be given to someone else. Ms. Olsen pointed out that the servers are in Ms. Miller's office, although this could be changed.
 - Mr. Naughton is not sure the solution is to offer more money to the person doing it and suggested looking into a combination of training other people and having someone in an oversight position who enjoys it.
 - Mr. Hanold suggested that members submit specific questions and this be discussed it with her along with the rest of her budget.
 - Mr. Naughton would like to hear about what exactly the responsibilities are, and the change in activity levels that lead to the requested increase. Noted that this may not be able to be implemented immediately and that this may be a long-term way to go.
 - Mr. Garrison noted that the highest and best use of her position is to bring in revenue to the town. If the increase request is essentially for the nuisance factor, he's not convinced as to the rationale.
 - Resolution is to include this discussion in the budget hearing for the Assessors on February 4th.
- The Building Inspector is requesting that the rates for inspectors be increased from \$27.06 to \$27.50 per inspection. This is a very modest increase and will not require an increase in the budget request. The inspectors last received an increase in FY2008. Some historical rate information:

FY1996	\$15.00	FY2006	\$25.63
FY1998	\$20.00	FY2007	\$26.27
FY2005	\$25.00	FY2008	\$27.06

Finance Committee Moved:

To recommend the requested increase of stipends for part-time inspectors from \$27.06 to \$27.50 per inspection.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Preliminary use of Reserves for Fiscal Year 2016

Financial Policy Guidelines are:

- Total Town Stabilization Funds plus Free Cash shall be maintained at 5-10% of PYGOR. For FY16, this is between \$815,788 and \$1,631,576.

Current balances are:

Free Cash	292,009
Town Stabilization	1,024,332
Town Capital Stabilization	<u>350,000</u>
Total	1,666,341

After estimated uses at 2/11/15 STM, total balance will be just under \$1.6 million.

- General Town Stabilization is to be maintained at minimum of 5% PYGOR (\$815,788).

Current balance is \$208,544 above this minimum.

- Town General Stabilization is only to be used if there is no money available in the Capital Stabilization Fund, or if there is a significant cut to State Aid.

Currently the Town capital requests are:

- \$46,000 for preservation of Town Records
- \$100,000 for DPW equipment (FY2015 was \$75,000 funded from Stabilization)
- \$43,325 for DPW lease (funded from Taxation in FY2015)
- \$39,500 for Police Cruiser (in operating budget)
- \$15,000 for Police equipment (funded from Taxation in FY2015)
- \$30,000 for the Shea Theater roof repair. Mr. Abbondanzio said this is a very preliminary estimate.

The most likely items to come from the Town Capital Stabilization Fund are the \$46,000 for Town Records, the Shea Roof Repair, and possibly part of the DPW Discretionary Fund. For now the budget file will show only the Town Records and Shea Theater expenses funded from reserves, leaving the opportunity to revisit the funding for the DPW.

Mr. Abbondanzio has initiated a discussion with Chief Dodge to see if the Police and Dispatch budget requests can be reduced, and said the Chief was willing to try to work with him and look for reductions.

Mr. Abbondanzio said that the transfer of the ownership of the Montague Center School is currently expected to occur on April 1st, so there is significant likelihood that the \$15,000 requested appropriation to maintain the building would not be necessary. It was suggested to keep the Montague Center School maintenance request in the budget, but to fund it from the Town Capital Stabilization Fund so that if it's not needed, it won't change any of the main budget numbers.

Mr. Abbondanzio reminded everyone that the \$40,000 for the plow and sander for the new DPW truck will come from Town Capital Stabilization at the February Special Town Meeting.

The WPCF capital requests are:

- \$100,000 for the Operations Building repairs and painting
- \$100,000 for the Operations Building heating system
- \$100,000 for a primary sludge pump replacement
- \$135,000 to line, clean, inspect, and GIS sewers
- \$250,000 to rehabilitate a storm drain installed in 1868
- There is \$100,000 in the WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund available

Most of these, if recommended, would need to come from borrowing, but one of the smaller ones could come from the new Capital Stabilization.

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Next Meetings:

January 28, 2015	WPCF, Police/Dispatch, and Legal budgets and Special Town Meeting Articles.
February 4, 2015	Assessors, Parks & Recreation, DPW budgets, Special Articles
February 11, 2015	Special Town Meeting- No Finance Committee meeting
February 18, 2015	FCTS, Capital Improvements Committee
February 25, 2015	Libraries
March 4, 2015	GMRSD
March 11, 2015	Final Use of Reserves, Final Schedules I and II
March 18, 2015	Special & Annual Town Meeting Special Articles
March 25, 2015	Vote Budget with sources of funding
April 1, 2015	Draft Finance Committee Report to Town Meeting
April 8, 2015	Revenue updates
April 15, 2015	Final votes/re-votes for recommendations, final report

Items not anticipated within 48 hours-

Ms. Golrick brought 3 items to the attention of the Finance Committee:

1. Is the Finance Committee aware of the cost and funding for the contract with the town of Erving for sewer services?
2. The cost of legal services for the Town, and the fact that there are no contracts in place with the Town's attorneys.
3. A Special Town Meeting is being scheduled that Ms. Golrick feels is unnecessary, as there are no emergency items, and which results in additional costs to the Town.

Mr. Abbondanzio responded that this Special Town Meeting is necessary for the following reasons:

- The Town is legally obligated to hold a town meeting within 30 days of the ratification of an agreement with a union. The UE contract has finally been settled, but needs to be ratified by Town Meeting by appropriating additional funds required for the Fiscal Year 2014 costs.
- There are required legal easements that must be in place for a sewer project which has a timeline from the state.
- There are time constraints involved with the opportunity to purchase the Senior Center building

Mr. Naughton updated the committee on the Foundation Budget Review Commission Hearing in Northampton, and noted that they are looking for feedback. The letter that was sent last March regarding Chapter 70 issues will be forwarded to the committee.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:10 PM

List of Documents and Exhibits

- Minutes for January 7, 2015
- Draft Fiscal Year 2016 Schedules I & II